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Inmate's 'Incredible' CIA Story Rejected Again

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McALESTER — Tulsa inmate James Naum's story that the CIA set up his wife's death and made him a political prisoner fell on deaf ears again Saturday.

Naum made his first appearance before the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board and asked that his 20-year sentence be reduced to time served so he could leave the country.

The board voted 5-0 to turn him down. "He's as crazy as a March hare," said Parole Board Chairman Robert Mitchell.

Mitchell called Naum's story "incredible ... unbelievable."

Naum has told the same story to the Tulsa jury which convicted him in 1979, the United Nations and the U.S. Justice Department. All turned a cold shoulder toward him.

"He hasn't changed his story," a corrections employee said after the hearing.

His wife, a Brazilian national, was strangled. Naum has admitted choking her, but believes she only passed out and that someone with CIA or FBI connections came along and choked her to the point of death after he had left her apartment.

Naum told his jury that he believed his wife was working for the CIA. She was a Catholic from Brazil "and they liked people like that," he said at his May 1979 trial.

One of Naum's former prison case managers said Naum has indicated he had trouble with the CIA while working as an engineer for the U.S. Navy and Strategic Air Command.

The nature of the trouble has never been spelled out.

Naum, who listed his Tulsa profession as a pilot engineer consultant, said in a 1978 resume that he had prepared a bomb wing readiness plan for the Air Force and designed a submarine for the Navy.

Under personal information in the resume, Naum said:

"41, marriedff3, Veteran, U.S.

Citizen — native born, U.S. passport, former secret clearance.

"Enjoy outdoors, skiing, golfing, fishing, swimming, running, boxing, music writing, traveling, and meeting people. Rifle team captain in college.

"Fluent French and fit (ran 10 mi in 1hr:26 on 6-24-77). Will consider any viable offer here or abroad, with U.S. or Foreign Interests."

Naum put his CIA theory in a letter to the parole board, which Mitchell read to himself during the hearing.

Naum made no verbal remarks about his story while appearing before the parole board. He only said that he would have to "work outside the country" when released from prison.

Naum shocked the courtroom by pleading guilty at his Tulsa trial after taking the witness stand and saying his wife "is either dead or in Brazil right now ... the government is definitely responsible."

He said there was a "strong possibility" the governor planted a bug in his brain or induced mind control in other ways.

The board Saturday discussed cutting its budget at the request of the governor, but delayed the action until January.

Betsy Paine, parole board executive director, said the board could absorb any deficits incurred in December.